

GULF COAST BEACH MOUSE ECOLOGY

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Beach mice, collectively, are a group of 8 subspecies of the oldfield mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus* ssp.). There are five subspecies of Gulf coast beach mice found from the western tip of Ft. Morgan Peninsula, Baldwin County, AL east to Money Bayou, Gulf County Florida. Four of the five are federally protected due to habitat loss. Beach mice rely on healthy dune ecosystems for their long-term survival. While direct impacts to beach mice are obvious (i.e. coastal development), other threats associated with these developments are much more subtle. Exotic and feral and free-ranging predators such as red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and feral and domestic cats (*Felis domesticus*), respectively, drastically impact the small, fragmented populations of beach mice. Additionally, non-native competitors such as house mice (*Mus musculus*), which are often associated with anthropogenic disturbances, compete with beach mice for limited food resources. Projects undertaken within the historic range of beach mice must consider the not only direct habitat loss but the less obvious impacts, as well.